Managing Stress

These 10 tips can help relieve stress.

December 17, 2018 By Meave Gallagher

A cancer diagnosis—yours or a loved one's—can add a lot of stress to your life. There's so much to learn about the disease and its potential treatments and their side effects. Sometimes just managing symptoms is a full-time job. But you need to take care of yourself—and not just physically. Take time to tend to your whole being, body, mind and soul.

Meditation is a scientifically proven way to relieve stress and depression. Sit comfortably and let your thoughts go, focusing on steady, rhythmic breathing. You can combine it with other relaxation exercises, such as tensing and releasing individual muscles, or try a free guided meditation app.

Yoga or tai chi can ease aching muscles, improve flexibility and balance, and help clear your thoughts. If an intense workout is too much, take a long walk or a few short ones. Think of exercise as a moving meditation, bringing awareness away from the mind and into the body. Plus, the endorphins your body releases during exercise act as a natural mood booster.

Eating well can help build a better foundation for handling the stress that comes with cancer. Keep your immune system strong with a balanced diet that's rich in nutrients and emotionally nourishing. Plenty of sleep is essential for recharging—try breathing exercises to ease bedtime anxiety. Herbal teas like chamomile may aid sleep, but be sure to check with your medical team before trying any supplements or alternative or complementary remedies.

Remember, you're not alone. Reach out to friends, join an in-person or online support group and remain active in your community. Join a crafting group or a book club to keep your mind focused on something other than worries and to reap the positive effects of social interaction. Consider therapy or counseling to discuss deeper, more intense issues.

10 Stress Relief Tips

1. Practice mindfulness. Meditation and prayer can be powerful natural sedatives.
2. Be aware. Recognizing signs of stress can help you identify its source and how to ease it.
3. Eat well. Your body requires nourishment to stay strong.
4. Keep busy. Distract yourself with puzzles, reading or crafts.
5. Move your body. A walk or some yoga can help calm your mind.
6. Ask for help. Talk to your medical team and lean on loved ones.

7. Visit friends, volunteer, take a class or attend an event.
8. Keep a journal. Get your thoughts out of your head and onto paper.
9. Be kind to yourself. Give yourself permission to experience all the emotions you feel.
10. Don’t push yourself too hard, and get enough sleep.

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